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### NAVMED NAVIGATOR

### Headlining in world news...

"It's a rerun of a bad movie." That's what President Bush calls Iraq's latest offer to comply with UN mandates. Bush says the current push among Security Council members to allow Saddam Hussein more time to disarm is exasperating. Officials say non-military options are quickly being exhausted and the US is willing to go to war without UN support. But US officials still insist next week's report to the UN Security Council is not a war-or-peace deadline.

The dispute over North Korea's nuclear weapons program could soon go before the UN Security Council. A US envoy in South Korea says he expects the international atomic energy agency to pass a resolution referring the dispute to the UN in "the very near future." The Security Council could consider economic sanctions against the North — Pyongyang has said such a move would amount to a declaration of war.

#### In U.S. news...

The federal effort to be ready for any small-pox attack is moving along. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shipped vaccine to seven states this week. At least six other states will be sent shipments within a week. Federal officials hope to begin vaccinating up to a half of a million emergency room workers and those on smallpox response teams. With smallpox not seen for more than two decades and no imminent threat of its return, vaccinations aren't recommended for the general public.

The Supreme Court heard arguments this week on a Maine program that allows senior citizens to buy prescription drugs across the border in Canada where they are cheaper. Called Maine-r-x, the law is designed to lower drug costs for state residents without insurance coverage and let the state negotiate lower prices on behalf of people who pay for prescription drugs. Twenty-eight states that support Maine's position are poised to act swiftly if the high court rules in its favor.

#### In sports news...

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers are getting pretty sick and tired of talking about their coach. Much of Tuesday's Super Bowl media session was spent discussing Jon Gruden, who has the Bucs in the championship game just a year after coaching the Oakland Raiders. The Raiders were almost one hour late for their media sparring session. Raiders receivers Tim Brown and Jerry Rice blamed the delay on ABC for keeping them too long for interviews. Oakland is a 4-point favorite to win today's Super Bowl at San Diego.

## Comfort's patient decontamination team prepares for wartime threat



Story and photos by JO2 Ellen Maurer

anked as one of the largest trauma facilities of the United States and possessing the special ability to go just about anywhere there's water, Navy hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) deployed after New Years and headed east. Their location, final destination, even the list of names of all crewmembers aboard has been kept quiet. What they're doing, though, is pretty

obvious; they're hoping for the best, but planning for the worst.

"Comfort's primary mission is medical and surgical care of combat casualties," says Capt. Charles Blankenship, Commanding Officer of the Medical Treatment Facility aboard Comfort.

"We left in early January to preposition the ship and to prepare the medical treatment facility in the event Comfort is needed for potential combat support."

However, being in the

right place at the right time is only part of what Comfort must do to be ready. Medical treatment during war is changing. Now, it's not only a matter of treating bullet wounds and shrapnel injuries, but also anything from anthrax to smallpox, or even a nerve agent or deadly radiation. As the threat of chemical, biological or radiological (CBR) attacks increase, it's the job of Comfort

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# NavyNews SECNAV says goodbye



Washington, D.C. (Jan. 23, 2003) -- Secretary of the Navy (SECNAV) Gordon R. England makes remarks during his farewell ceremony held at the Washington Navy Yard. "After all is said and done, when I take my leave, I will miss you," said the Secretary as a final message to all Sailors and Marines. A farewell ceremony was conducted Thursday in honor of Gordon R. England, the 72nd Secretary of the Navy who is leaving to take on the unique challenge as the Deputy at the newly formed Department of Homeland Security. England will continue to serve as Secretary of the Navy until the Senate confirmation process is completed. U.S. Navy photo by Chief Photographer's Mate Johnny Bivera.

# Navy docs lift off on shuttle flight

By Brian Badura Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery

Navy Medicine's Capt. Dave Brown and Cmdr. Laurel Salton Clark lifted off Jan. 16 on shuttle mission STS-107.

Their mission, as part of a seven-member crew aboard the shuttle orbiter Columbia, will pack more than 90 medical, biological, and physical science experiments and investigations into a 16-day flight.

Fifteen experiments will look at the effects of weightlessness on the human body, including bone and muscle loss. Tests will also assess the use of different methods of fire suppression in space.

"We will work the payloads on orbit and hand them back to the primary researcher after the mission, hopefully passing on the information that they were looking for," Clark said

In addition to being an



astronaut, Clark is a flight surgeon, radiation health officer and undersea medicine officer.

To meet the mission's goals, the crew is divided into two teams who split the crew's workload.

According to NASA, STS-107 will be the last dedicated science mission for the shuttle program. The mission was originally intended to lift off in 2000, but other higher-priority missions and maintenance concerns pushed the launch back.

### Interactive TRICARE handbook now available online

From TRICARE Marketing Activity

The new online TRICARE handbook now has interactive features that will make it even more userfriendly and offers dynamically updated information.

The online version is available at **www.tricare.osd.mil** and offers a search function that allows either a subject or general search. It also allows users to jump to specific sections of the handbook by using the interactive table of contents.

"The ability to provide real-time updates and the search functions may be two of the best features of the Online TRICARE Handbook," said Cmdr. Ginny Raderstorf, director of Military Treatment Facility and



Beneficiary Support Services for the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in Washington, D.C.

"As TRICARE benefits or processes change, the ability to provide updates to the handbook's content will ensure our beneficiaries have the most current information. Additionally, the dual search functions makes it much easier to find what you're looking for."

The TRICARE handbook may also be downloaded in printer-friendly format by section or in its entirety.

# **Shipboard Training**



If practice makes perfect, then the Sailors aboard USNS Comfort must be going for a record. Training every day in a variety of ways, this team knows that getting a ship ready means getting its crew prepared — not only for its medical mission but also for life aboard a ship that could be anchored not too far from the danger zone.

Coordinating the training efforts aboard Comfort are the ship's Staff Education and Training department, headed by Cmdr. Susan Galloway, along with HM3 Daniel St. Hilaire and HM3 Jeannette Carrillo. Together, the three of them schedule and prepare classes on everything from CPR requalifications to anti-terrorism education.

"This time that we have while

the ship is underway is a really good opportunity to meet our critical training goals," explains Galloway. "It's important to maintain our Navy and rate-specific requirements because the bottom line is that we must be ready to complete the mission."

(Right) A Comfort crewmember helps a shipmate adjust her gas mask during CBR protective gear education and fitting.

(Below right) Comfort's Admin department (A-1) attends litter bearer training in the Physical Therapy. Ship's Chaplain, Lt. Cmdr. Mark Koczak plays the part of the patient.

(Below left) During an abandon ship drill, crewmembers grab their lifejackets and covers, and muster at their assigned raft stations.







# Comfort crewmember named NNMC Senior Sailor the Quarter

HM1 Phillip Anzick, who works in the Blood Bank aboard Comfort and at NNMC, was recently named NNMC Senior Sailor of the Quarter. Anzick has been in the Navy for 11 years. Stationed at NNMC since June 1999, this is his third deployment aboard Comfort.

### CBR, from Page 1

crewmembers to figure out ways to save the injured or infected without contaminating an entire ship and its crew.

To do this, it takes not only a good plan but also a lot of practice, says CBR patient decontamination team commander, Ensign Gary Hardy. He and his team spend two hours each day running through drills that will help prepare them to receive patients of a CBR disaster.

Their goal is to get contaminated patients from Comfort's helicopter pad into one the ship's three decontamination stations. Their last step is checking the patient to make sure all traces of CBR contamination are gone, so the patient can be transported into the ship's casualty receiving area where they'll receive their next level of medical attention.

According to Hardy, speed is not the most important part of patient decontamination. The most important part is thoroughness. However, Hardy adds, many of these patients will have injuries that require assistance, so they must work as quickly as possible, without sacrificing safety.

"The team needs to be both fast and thorough because if we spread contaminates to the inside of the ship, the other medical crew can't do their job and then we've defeated our whole purpose," says Hardy.

His crew is very focused on their mission, says Hardy. During training, they move together like a machine and no one talks. Even though it's only training, Hardy says they take it seriously because they know that in a real situation, their ability to focus on the job could mean the difference between life and death, for them and their patients.

"My team, like the rest of the MTF crew, is completely dedicated to supporting our ship's mission of providing medical care to all in harm's way. There are many threats out there; CBR is just one of them, but it's not one that will stop patient care aboard this ship," says Hardy.

Currently, the ship's crew is relatively small. There are a limited number of Sailors and civilian mariners aboard, running and readying the ship for its potential wartime mission. There are 15 crewmembers on Comfort's CBR patient decontamination team. However, if a combat contingency does start up, the ship's crew could nearly triple in size, adding about 25 more people to the patient decon team.

Hardy adds, "As in all readiness preparation, training never stops."



### **Chaplain's Column**Where are we?

By Chaplain (Lt. Cmdr.) Mark Koczak

This is one of the great questions for Sailors at sea. It is extremely important for each of us on the COMFORT, personally, to be aware of our location on the ship. Most of us usually know this, however with drills and training we can always learn more.

This is where we work and live. More importantly, this is a ship, not a place on shore. It can be dangerous to each one of us. When I spoke to the new folks, a couple weeks ago, I asked them about the location of many places on the ship, like the library and the chapel, which are great places to spend time when you're off duty.

The greatest danger to everyone on the COMFORT is boredom. It literally freezes our minds and bodies and it destroys our morale. Try to do something different everyday and you will beat it.

Many of you on the decks, in your workspaces and in the mess hall, have asked me about where we are. Our geographical location is important. However, remember that we cannot talk about this in email and on the phone.

We will be going through some of the most important places in the history of our culture. For those of you who are religious and know the Bible and the Torah, read it now. Please come and talk to me about these locations. This is a chance of a lifetime to be there and to see it.

When we know where we are we, as human beings, can begin to answer the next important question -- who are we? For many, the answer is "I don't know." It is our calling in life to learn and grow. We have a basic need to know. The moment we stop wanting to or caring to we are in trouble.

Each one of us needs to have personal discipline every day to read, write letters, look at our email, look on the net -- not to just pass the time but to use the mind that God gave us. For the medical folks, including doctors, nurses and corpsmen, you have a great gift and talent to help heal others. The rest of us support you.

Let us spend the next week continuing to train and learn so we can begin to answer that question -- where are we?